

## **Project Narrative**

### **13B Commonwealth Avenue LLC Application to the Concord Zoning Board of Appeals**

#### **1. Nature and Justification of the Request**

The Applicant seeks an amendment to the existing special permit approval that was granted for the property as part of the Zoning Board of Appeals Approval on May 9, 2013 of 50 Beharrell Street and 13B Commonwealth Avenue (13B), in West Concord. This approval was for two buildings; a mixed-use building containing 74 residential units and approximately 36,600 square feet of commercial space and its corresponding parking lot at 50 Beharrell Street, and a 6,750 square foot commercial building and 27 parking spaces at 13B Commonwealth Ave. Brookside Square was constructed on 50 Beharrell Street, along with a parking lot and access drive that were built on 13B Commonwealth Ave. Prior to constructing the building that was approved for 13B Commonwealth Ave, however, the Approval stated that the Applicant was to return to the Planning Board and the West Concord Advisory Committee to present the architectural design of the building.

The Applicant commenced this architectural and design review for 13B approximately three years ago. The Applicant has presented concepts for a building at 13B numerous times with the Planning Staff, the Planning Board (in the Fall of 2019), the West Concord Advisory Committee, and the West Concord Junction Cultural District Committee. Based upon feedback received from each of these bodies, the Applicant has refined the project design multiple times to be in harmony with the comments from the members of town boards and committees, as well as to meet the objectives and recommendations of the West Concord Master Plan and West Concord Design Guidelines. Based on the input received during these meetings, the proposed project is to construct a three story mixed-use building with commercial/ retail/ business uses on the first floor and residential units for the second and third floors. In order to achieve this proposal, the Applicant requests consideration of an amendment to the original Brookside Square decision. This proposed modification pertains to the 13B Commonwealth Avenue portion of the initial Approval, and no alterations to the Brookside Square building at 50 Beharrell Street is part of the application.

As more fully detailed in sections II and III, the project proposal for 13B Commonwealth Avenue is for the construction of a “Combined Business/Residence” as contemplated in Section 4.2.3 of the Bylaw, while incorporating publicly available open space amenities on the east and west sides of the building, as well as between the rear of the building and the existing parking lot. Whereas the property was initially approved for commercial space of 6,750 square feet, the Applicant’s current proposal has reduced the commercial space to 5,250 sft, and added two stories to the building with 8 residential units. Whereas the initial proposal included 27 parking spaces to be built on 13B Commonwealth Ave (and which have been constructed), the revised proposal increases the parking required to 33 spaces to account for the additional residential parking requirements. The revised parking design remains in conformance with the parking ratio of 1.5 spaces per residential unit that was granted relief as part of the initial Brookside Square

Approval, in accordance with Section 7.7.2.1, 7.7.2.4 and 7.7.2.12 of the Bylaw, and the Applicant is seeking to continue this ratio, although with 6 more total parking spaces.

The West Concord Master Plan identified the project site of 13B Commonwealth Ave as a vital redevelopment parcel that was central to the accomplishment of numerous master plan goals. These included 13B (1) being identified as a “Redevelopment Site”, and (2) enabling the improvement of traffic circulation in the Village by connecting the West Concord Commuter Rail Parking Lot with Commonwealth Ave further west of the existing entrance via an extended Beharrell Street. In fact, this connection was so important, that when the Applicant sought to redevelop 50 Beharrell, the town made it clear that the Applicant would need to assemble the 13B parcel in order to make this connection possible. After more than a year of negotiations and at great cost, the Applicant was successful in purchasing this property from the owner of the former Jeep Dealership. This enabled the construction of the Beharrell Street Extension, and most recently the Town’s connection of Beharrell Street to the West Concord Commuter Rail parking lot, over the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail. Today, the Beharrell Street Extension serves as a second, safer and more convenient entrance and exit from the Commuter Rail parking lot, alleviating traffic congestion caused by the multiple vehicles attempting to exit the parking lot in the evening. The proposed project will also (3) enhance the open space values identified within the Master Plan through the incorporation of new open space on the sides of the building, as well as in the rear, between the building and the parking lot, which will be open and available to the public.

The Applicant seeks an amendment to the previously granted Special Permit and Site Plan Approval in accordance with sections 11.6, 11.8, and 4.2.3 (including subparts 4.2.3.3, and 4.2.3.4), 7.7.3.4, and Table 1 of the Zoning Bylaw, allowing a mixed-use building of up to 40 feet in height (with a special permit) within the West Concord Village district. Additionally, the Applicant intends to construct the project in accordance with the previously existing Special Permit Approval as it pertains to sections 7.7.2.1, 7.7.2.4, 7.7.2.6, 7.7.2.12, 11.6 and 11.8. The Applicant intends to construct the project using the same parking ratios as previously approved per section 7.7.2.12 as part of the parking relief that was granted for Brookside Square and 13B Commonwealth Ave. Brookside Square was granted relief to build 1.5 parking spaces per residential unit, rather than the prescribed 2 spaces per residential unit due to the nature of the project’s transit-oriented, walkable location in the amenity-filled Village environment. 13B will stay consistent with this 1.5 spaces per residential unit. However, due to the increased square footage of the new building proposed for 13B, the Applicant will add 6 parking spaces to the previously existing parking plan, bringing the total number of spaces to 33. Under section 7.7.3.4, the Applicant is seeking a waiver for the design of four of these parking spaces. Due to the size and shape of the lot, four of the new spaces will need to be built in a tandem configuration. These spaces will be used by the occupants of residential units who can coordinate their use. The Applicant is also seeking relief under sections 4.2.3.3 and 4.2.3.4 pertaining to the amount of Open Space on the site, as well as the height of the building. Finally, this application incorporates the requirements of site plan review under sections 11.8, 11.8.5 and 11.8.6 of the bylaw.

## II. Description of Proposed Amendment

Prior to the construction of Brookside Square, which occurred between 2013 and 2015, 13B Commonwealth Ave existed as a 100% impervious parking lot that served the Jeep Dealership that was in business at that time. The construction activities for Brookside, as approved in the original site plan approval and special permit, included building a parking lot of 27 spaces on 13B, in addition to numerous underground utilities, landscaping, sidewalks and the completion of the Beharrell Street Extension connecting Commonwealth Ave and the Commuter Rail parking lot through Brookside Square. The location of the previously approved 6,750 square foot commercial building has existed as a grassy lawn since 2015.

The current proposal retains the Beharrell Street Extension, sidewalks, utilities and parking lot, however, the Applicant will replace the approved single story 6,750 sft. building with a three story mixed-use building. The Applicant will also add six new parking spaces. Three of these will be added to the existing parking lot, and three parallel parking spaces will be built on the Beharrell Street extension. The building will have a footprint of 6,495 sft, with 5,250 sft of commercial/ business space and 1,245 sft consisting of a residential entrance lobby, stairwell, elevator, elevator machine room, trash room and hallway that will connect the front of the building to the rear. The second and third floors will have 4 residential units on each floor, for a total of 8. Consistent with the Combined Business/ Residential Use, 2 of the residential units will be affordable. In order to stay consistent with the relief that was previously approved for the project's parking ratio allowing 1.5 spaces for each residential unit, the Applicant will be adding 6 spaces to 13B for a total of 33 spaces on the property. The 8 residential units will be serviced by 12 spaces, and the commercial component of the project will have access to 21 spaces, which is consistent with a 1 space per 250 sft ratio. Four of the spaces for the residential will be configured as tandem spaces, which are intended to be used by the occupants of two of the units. The Applicant is seeking a waiver for the design of these four spaces per Section 7.7.3.4 of the bylaw. Once again, the Applicant will not be revising anything located on 50 Beharrell Street.

The Applicant is also seeking relief under sections 4.2.3.3 and 4.2.3.4 pertaining to the amount of Open Space specifically on 13B. The Bylaw calls for twice the gross floor area of the residential portion of the building. The residential area is approximately 13,060 SFT, which would result in an Open Space area of just over 26,000 SFT. Currently, we have 6,772 SFT of open area onsite, in addition to 527.5 SFT of decks and balconies for the residential, which the bylaw recognizes for open space since each of these balconies are over 25 SFT.

## III. Narrative

### A. The Mixed-Use Building Proposed at 13B Commonwealth Avenue Incorporates the West Concord Design Guidelines and the Special Permit Criteria Under the Bylaw.

The mixed-use building proposed at 13B Commonwealth Avenue incorporates the West Concord Design Guidelines and the special permit criteria under 11.6 of the bylaw, namely "that

the adverse effects of the proposed will not outweigh its beneficial impacts to the public interest, the town and the neighborhood”...

13B is located within the West Concord Village zoning district and the proposed building adheres to lot size, frontage and setback dimensional regulations under the bylaw. Further, the building height proposed at slightly less than 40 feet is permitted by grant of special permit provided at least 10% of the housing units are affordable (Applicant is proposing 25% affordability) and the project will not be detrimental or injurious to the neighborhood. (See section 4.2.3.4) The slight increase over the default 35 foot building height as set out in Table 3 of the bylaw will not impact views of the neighborhood. In fact, various stakeholders within the community have made it clear to the Applicant that the 3 story building is preferred over the previously approved one-story building, and that it would be more consistent with the historical character and the current streetscape along Commonwealth Ave. The building will utilize parapets on its façades which will exceed the 35 foot height in order to screen the HVAC units that will be placed on the roof, as well as to gain a slope for roof drainage to be pitched correctly away from the edges of the building. This is also consistent with section 6.2.11, which defines Height, saying “Chimneys, spires, towers and other projections not used for human occupancy or storage may extend above the height limits herein fixed...”

#### 1. A Mixed-Use Building is in Harmony with the West Concord Design Guidelines.

As to be further addressed in the public hearings within this application, the proposed project has been designed to be consistent with the West Concord Master Plan goals and recommendations and specifically to advance the intent of the West Concord Design Guidelines. The Applicant has participated in numerous meetings with the West Concord Advisory Committee, as well as the West Concord Junction Cultural District Committee, and the most recent design has garnered positive feedback and support from members of these committees. This design was steered in large part by the feedback from these community stakeholders. It is intended to further promote the multi-level streetscape of Commonwealth Ave’s existing buildings, featuring base, middle and top courses, as an onlooker travels west on Commonwealth Ave. It will serve as an appropriate and worthy gateway into the Village.

The Applicant is chiefly aware of the significant cultural and historic significance of the Commonwealth Ave corridor within the fabric of the West Concord Village District. The Applicant looked to West Concord’s past for inspiration for the proposed building, and seeks to construct a modern interpretation of the building that stood at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century at 84 Commonwealth Ave, which saw its top two floors tragically burn down in 1903.

#### 2. The Beneficial Impacts of the Project Exceed Any Perceived Adverse Effect in Accordance with the Criteria of Section 11.6 of the Bylaw.

a) As addressed above, the project proposal advances several goals identified in the West Concord Master Plan, with respect to the development of a property identified within the Plan as

appropriate for redevelopment, open space creation, and to further traffic improvements. The development of 13B had been initially approved in 2013 as part of the Brookside Square project and this submittal improves on the previously approved building in ways that have been both directed by and supported by community stakeholders. The new proposal creates improved opportunities for the residents to live, shop and pursue recreation within the West Concord area. Further, the applicant is cognizant of the need to preserve an unconventional, funky nature of the area, as reflected in the building's design elements. Additional residential density will further the desire for walkability within the Village, putting residents within walking distance to the many retail, dining and recreational offerings in the Village, promoting support for area businesses and reducing the reliance upon automobiles to transport customers to these businesses.

#### b) Traffic Flow and Safety

Traffic was a major component of the analysis of Brookside Square. One of the key components of the project involved the Applicant's ability to acquire the 13B Commonwealth Avenue property to provide a looped roadway (Beharrell Street) and access to the commuter rail parking area. This connection of Commonwealth Ave and the Commuter Rail parking lot via the Beharrell Street Extension was a long-sought-after goal cited in the West Concord Master Plan that would not have been possible without the assemblage of 13B and its connection with Brookside Square.

#### c) Adequacy of Utilities and Public Service

The project is estimated to require approximately 2500 gallons per day. At the time of the previous approval in 2013, the Applicant purchased 1,000 gallons per day from the Concord Water Department to accommodate only the commercial square footage that was approved at that time. However, the newly proposed project is estimated to require 1,500 additional gallons per day for a total of 2,500 gallons per day. The applicant will work with the Concord Public Works Water and Sewer Division to purchase additional capacity for this increase during the permitting process.

#### d) Impacts on Neighborhood Character

The project proposal's multi-use character aligns itself with the goals and intent within the Master Plan and design guidelines and enhances the workable/ livable character of West Concord Village. The proposal's architectural elements honor the architectural significance and historic character of the immediate area. The commercial offerings, though unknown at this time, will add to the vibrancy and the everyday utility of the commercial district. They will help to serve the daily needs of West Concord residents, while attracting customers who will also patronize other West Concord establishments. Many of those customers will be residents of the residential units in the proposed building, who will be within walking distance of the train, and of the shops and restaurants around the Village. Lastly, the proposed building will serve as an important and fitting gateway to visitors who enter West Concord Village from the West, as well

as to existing West Concord residents.

e) Fiscal Impacts of the Project.

Please see the fiscal impact analysis of the initial Approval for Brookside Square, attached. The project is anticipated to generate a positive net revenue for the Town due to its highly valued taxable space and minimal costs when compared to other residential uses, such as single family homes, that generate greater numbers of school children.

B. The Unique Amenities Available to Users and Residents of the Proposed Project Merit a Continuation of the Reduction of Residential Parking Requirements Below a 2 to 1 Ratio that was granted during the initial approval of Brookside Square.

The parking design for the Project includes a total of 33 spaces on the property of 13B. This is 6 more than the previously approved parking count of 27. Of the 33 spaces, 12 will be for the residential users, at a parking ratio of 1.5:1, while 21 spaces will be for the 5,250 sft of commercial space, at a ratio of 1 space for every 250 sft.

Although the Applicant is proposing to add 6 spaces to the current parking lot to accommodate the increased size of the building, the Applicant is staying within the parking ratio that was approved in the initial site plan application for Brookside Square and 13B Commonwealth Avenue. The additional residential on the site will be balanced with the addition of more parking spaces and the reduction of approximately 1,500 square feet of the previously approved retail footprint. In light of the transit-oriented nature of the site and its location within a walkable village environment with numerous amenities close-by, and based upon an anticipated ability for the commercial and residential users to physically share parking spaces at different times of the day, the Applicant seeks to stay consistent with the parking ratios already approved for the Brookside Square project.